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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR IO/UNESCO KELLY SIEKMAN AND LAURA GRITZ

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL UNESCO SCUL KWBG JO IS

SUBJECT: ISRAEL EXPECTS TO RELEASE EQUIPMENT FOR WAQF
DOCUMENT CONSERVATION IN NEAR FUTURE

REF: STATE 60242

¶1. (SBU) Responding to reftel points, MFA Acting Director for International Organizations Eli Ben-Tura told PolOff June 16 that the GOI expects to release "in the very near future" the shipment of technical equipment destined for use by the Jerusalem Waqf to preserve Islamic-era manuscripts. Ben-Tura said that "Customs has agreed and the paperwork is ready;" all that remained was for Israel to receive Jordanian payment for the storage costs. Barring any last-minute surprises, the shipment should be released and in Waqf hands well before the July 2 commencement of the World Heritage Committee meeting in Quebec, he said.

¶2. (SBU) On the other issue raised reftel -- continuing Israeli opposition to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions -- Ben-Tura was not aware of any change in Israel's position since its 2005 vote, but acknowledged the European pressure to sign the Convention. He vowed to discuss our points with others and respond if anything changes.

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JONES